

The Baltic States

Transition towards Efficient Armed Forces

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Introduction

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have now succeeded in their security policy aspirations. All three were invited to join NATO at the November 2002 Prague Summit. They have now concluded their accession talks and are to join the Alliance in spring 2004.

The mature political and economic development in the three, very different, states has made this step natural. During the last five or so years the three have also gradually accelerated their efforts to prepare their developing armed forces for a role in the Alliance. This task has not been and will not be easy. One of the reasons is that this task included both a building-up from the ground and thereafter a total reform of the first new structures. The latter challenge is similar to that required everywhere in the Central and Eastern European armed forces to make them focused and cost-effective.

This article will cover different key aspects of the reform needs in all these states thereby, indirectly, covering the situation in the Baltic states

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since 1991 and the coming years. It is built on eight years of observations, studies, conversations and work in the three states as an insider with the perspective of an outsider. In the last three years the regional perspective has been supplemented and enriched with observations and conversations in several other Central and East European (CEE) countries.

The first phase

The building-up of the armed forces was seen as urgent. During the first few years, there was an acute percep-

tion of the threat. The Russian occupation troops were still around, and statements from a variety of sources in the Russian Federation reinforced the inherent problem of their presence. Something had to be done, quickly, to develop the ability to fight back.

This was not easy. Cadres for the armed forces had to be recruited. Some were found among the limited number of relatively untainted professionals from the Soviet Armed Forces. Others came from the volunteer cadres of the home guard forces created or recreated in 1990-91. The



Festiviteiten bij het leggen van de eerste steen van het gebouw van de Defensie Liga in Riga, tegenwoordig het Baltic Defence College (BDC), september 1939 (Bron: BDC; collectie: IMG/KI)



Het gebouw van de Defensie Liga na voltooiing in 1941, in gebruik genomen als Duits Hoofdkwartier

(Bron: BDC; collectie: IMG/KI)

latter group was supplemented with officers, normally retired, from the Baltic Diaspora in the U.S. and elsewhere.

A strained relationship between these two groups and their political friends added to the problems on several occasions. None had any experience of how to build and operate armed forces in small democracies.

The forces had to be armed and equipped. The withdrawing colonial forces took everything with them, and initially no states dared to donate and few were willing to sell armaments, concerned as all were with the possible response of Russia.

A destroyed military infrastructure

The military infrastructure was deliberately destroyed by the departing Russians and thereafter used as quarries by the local population. What was destroyed and what was left was of

very low quality. What had initially been well constructed in the Russian Empire or during the Independence Period had been undermined by bad maintenance, and what had been built in the last Soviet decades was in an even worse shape.

Parallel to the armed forces building-up, the national economy had to be reformed and revitalised, and the state had to justify taxing it for common projects by developing a new 'social contract', the legitimacy of the political system and trust in its leadership. This is still an unfinished process, and it was and is far from obvious that a significant part of the limited available state resources should go to the development of the armed forces.

Priorities

Both a majority of the population and most politicians considered it futile to attempt to create independent self-defence forces. The maximum that most considered possible and desir-

able was the marking of the national will to exist by a fight at the border followed by guerrilla actions in the forests. Only a potential NATO-framework for the armed forces could justify giving a high priority to their development beyond that basic level.

The reform requirements

It is important to understand, and accept, that the transition outlined in the rest of the article is necessary for the creation of 'best practice' Western type armed forces for the Post Cold War variety of missions. The process is likely to be protracted before completed, spanning a couple of decades in most cases. It is relevant not only for CEE states that aspire and prepare for NATO membership, but also for new NATO member states that want to develop effective contributions to the alliance and to international operations in other frameworks.

It is, however, also relevant for the states with a Soviet or Yugoslav heritage that only want to create effective, future-orientated armed forces. The reforms described are relevant no matter what main tasks the forces are given, the degree of specialisation, and the level of resources made available for the creation and maintenance of the structures.

The Baltic states and nearly all other CEE states are on some path towards the here outlined reformed situation. However, the CEE countries have much work to do before they reach a 'best practice' level. They are not alone. Several West European states have apparently found it difficult to adjust their militaries and the political-military co-operation pattern away from the Cold War optimisation, preparing to meet the one and only threat.

The required reforms go far beyond the creation of basic interoperability to ensure a reasonable level of English language understanding in the cadre, effective technical communications interfaces as well as common communication, reporting and command formats. They even go beyond creating the 'human interoperability' that comes from the ability to accept and understand different national and organisational cultures well enough to co-operate with a minimum of friction. What is required is a deep transformation of structures that ensures the largest and most effective force contribution that can be created on the basis of the available limited resources.

The Political-Military co-operation level

A focused development and use of the armed forces of a state depends on an effective and trusting dialogue between the elected state politicians and the formally appointed, senior officer. In a reformed situation, the following relationship has been established.

The directly responsible politician, normally the defence minister, will in an open and effective way communicate the political priorities and limitations. He understands that he is totally dependent on the advice from and effective implementation of decisions by the armed forces represented by their senior representative, the Commander of the Armed Forces.

servicing and the situation in the different armed services under his command.

The Chief and his associates must accept deep in their hearts that they are there to serve the elected politicians in the government loyally, no matter what they think of them or their policies. In a mature democracy



Een lid van een Brits trainings- en adviesteam overlegt met een Estlandse commandant tijdens een aanvalsoefening (Collectie: IMG/KI)

The latter understands and accepts that his role is limited to the subordinate one of advice and implementation. He will, to be effective, have a deep professional understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the existing armed forces and the potential of any planned or possible developments. This understanding will only be developed by a combination of gaining professional and personal maturity during a protracted and varied service. It needs to be created and maintained by actively seeking to be updated about the condition of the forces, and by having developed a positive empathy with both the role and situation of the politicians he is

military leaders have no formal or informal direct responsibilities to the nation.

Legacies from the past

This – reformed – situation is not easy to generate. A legacy of the past was that the new post-1989 politicians deeply mistrusted the leading military, and tended to seek the advice they wanted to hear by bypassing the formal leaders, or by getting it from foreign advisors. In some cases the advice, if any, from the existing professional military was so remote from the requirements, and so irrelevant, that no advice was sought thereafter. The reason for not seeking advice

could, in some instances, be that the politician simply did not think that he needed the advice.

The professional military on their side were normally unsuited to play their role in the new relationship. Very few accepted that the government, made up of 'amateurs' who served a party group rather than the nation, could have any real authority over national security matters. Subordination to the state president might be accepted, but not to a 'politician' from the parliament.

Having developed professionally in a dictatorship, where the armed forces only had the preparation for total war to worry about, senior officers found

al and centralistic management style that hindered effective interaction with talented subordinates.

To develop co-operation

A precondition for the easy creation of a dialogue based on trust is, however, that the politicians chosen as defence ministers are eager to develop the co-operation, and that they understand the need for good interaction. Another obvious requirement is that they, and the civil servants that assist them, are trustworthy, honest, decent, capable, and mature persons.

It would be very difficult for a senior, grizzled professional, who, by definition, is willing to lay down his life for the nation, to respect a corrupt, self-

forces. Thus there were two groups of senior military personnel, none of them with a background that prepared them very well for their part in the political-military dialogue in a small democratic state. In these three states the transition depends on the leading professional positions being filled by officers with most of their service experience and education from the post-1991 period. A full generation change must take place within the next few years to ensure the proper use of state resources and an effective integration in NATO.

In all CEE countries successful transition requires an accelerated generation change in the leadership from colonel level upwards combined with a drastic slimming of the bloated number of officers of high rank. A well organised and supported retirement scheme is thus a precondition for reform.



Staf van het Baltic Defence College (Bron: BDC; collectie: IMG/KI)

The unit level

The problems of the unreformed armed force structure are clearly visible at the bottom of the structure, the unit level. The key purpose of a peacetime military structure is to develop and maintain high-quality units, (battalions, ships, air force squadrons) at various states of readiness. The first step in fulfilling that purpose is to ensure high-quality, professionally and personally mature unit leadership. The structure must ensure that the very best mid-career officers are rotated out from the central staff and training elements to command units. This is necessary to ensure that the units have the best leadership possible and to create a professional foundation for later work in senior staff, military education and command positions.

The personnel management system should make certain that the very best compete hard to get unit command, knowing that without a successful period as commander, their career will be limited to specialist fields, and

it close to impossible to understand more limited roles for the armed forces and accept that a dialogue with the 'amateurs' was necessary.

The smaller the state, the more difficult it was for ex-Soviet officers to adjust. Nearly all senior army and many air force officers simply lacked the professional depth to create other types of forces than those they had been programmed to operate. They were also handicapped by a dictatori-

servant character as his boss. It does not help co-operation either, if he routinely transmits his decisions indirectly, via unjustifiably self-confident, newly employed, young civil servants.

In the Baltic states the situation was often even more complex. As mentioned above, persons from the volunteer and paramilitary forces without regular officer education gained a key role in the development of the armed

they will not reach high command posts. The system, however, should also ensure that rotation between posts in different parts of the country is supported economically and by common-sense regulations so that the families of the best officers feel reasonably well supported.

Freedom of action

The unit should have a very high and demanding activity level in order to ensure that the officer develops and is tested as unit commander. The commander should have considerable freedom of action, even if his performance in all fields is evaluated continuously. In good Western armies, a senior officer with recent, very successful unit command experience, in the army normally a brigade commander, carries out the key role in the evaluation.

As the future leadership is serving as unit commanders, the central staffs keep in close contact with the units to ensure that their administration is supporting unit effectiveness.

This situation is very far removed from the unreformed situation in the Central and Eastern European armed forces. The units were commanded by very young officers, in the army normally captains. They had little or no freedom of action. The 'centre', the central authorities in the capital, inspected their work, but they had absolutely no influence on developments and decisions at that centre. Their life and that of their officers mirrored the provincial garrison life of Chekov's plays, without the more charming fin-de-siecle elements.

If they were lucky or well connected they escaped early to a position in the 'centre' and to higher military education. Most stayed in the centre, quickly becoming bureaucrats or teachers

with only a faint, very theoretical link to the reality in the units, abhorring the very idea of ever returning to these units.

Undermining factors

Creating a well-functioning rotation system in the CEE armed forces is very often undermined by the following four factors:

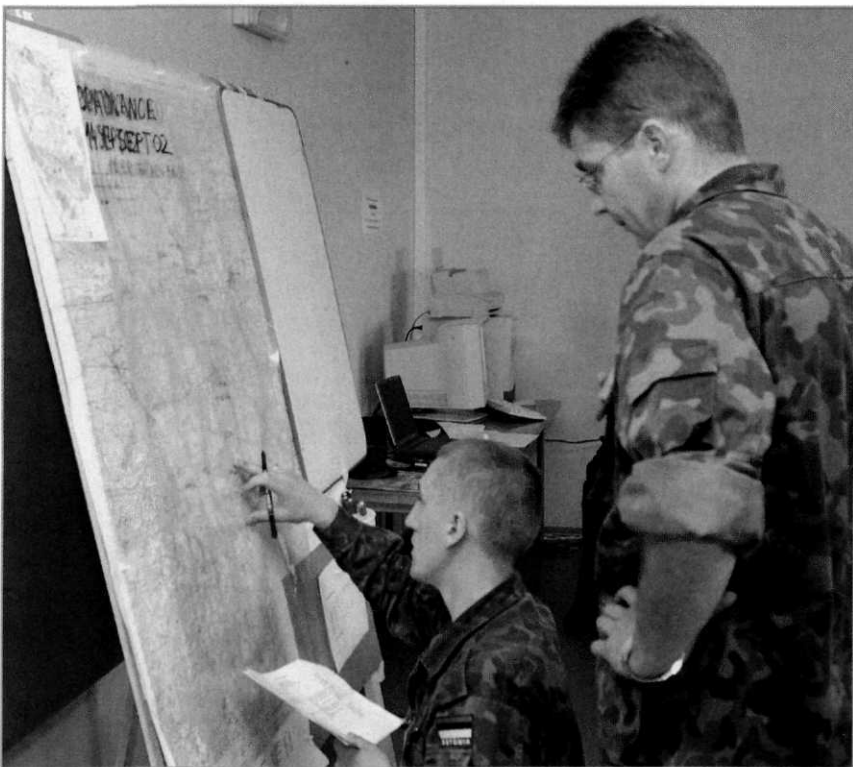
- The officers see no reason why they and their families should suffer, when the politicians, civil servants, and senior officers above and around them act with little or no public or professional spirit.
- The politicians and senior commanders do not want to let their best and most intelligent military assistants depart for the provinces.
- There is little or no understanding of the fact that practice is more important than theory in creating military effectiveness.

- In a world where the 'Potemkin Village' facade¹ is much more important than the reality, the units do not count.

At the Basic Combined Arms Formation level

Western armies have found that the existence of the basic combined arms formation headquarters level, normally the brigade, is necessary for the development of an officer corps in the units with a practical, professional understanding of combined armed tactics.

The unit, the battalion, will, in its training programme, have to concentrate on the training of the sub-units, the companies, specialising in developing effective handling of the 'tools' organic to the unit. Therefore it is nearly impossible for the unit itself to create and conduct realistic training, developing the ability of the rein-



Estlandse militairen tijdens de oefening Baltic Eagle, Estland, september 2002 (Collectie: IMG/KI)

¹ In order to give the Czarina, Catharine the Great, the best possible impression, Prince Potemkin had the villages painted that she was to pass during her visit. The tendency to give the façade a higher priority than substance is widespread in CEE.

forced unit staff to operate effectively together with other combat, combat support and combat service support units or elements. On the other hand, it is also close to impossible for a central joint planning and administrative staff to develop and conduct a realistic field-training programme, because the focus and main activities of such a staff makes it unsuitable. A special central service training staff – an army Training Command – may be used, but it is likely to lack that organic communication framework and relevant professional mix of expertise and direct unit focus that is inherent to tactical level formation headquarters.

Most CEE armed forces had tactical formation HQs; they only needed to be reformed in focus and activities. However, that was not the case with the Baltic states. This was due to the fact that they started force development from scratch and did not consider combined armed tactics relevant. The maximum the initially created forces would be able to do against the overwhelming Russian threat was a marking of the national sovereignty at the border – followed by guerrilla actions with light infantry and engineers in the forests. Only the new NATO mission framework for operations inside and outside the region now creates new professional requirements.

Lack of training activities

The training of the unit level officers in the Baltic states has so far suffered from the lack of formation level training activities. The Lithuanian 'Iron Wolf' Brigade staff is only now developing into a tactical formation HQs. The Latvian Motorised Brigade HQs existed only in name and was thereafter abolished. The Estonian General Staff did not realise the need for mid-level tactical HQs until recently, under political pressure.

All CEE armed forces should in fact understand that a tactical formation staff should be seen and built as a small team of flexible professional

generalists, that operates with the support of a few watch-keepers, communicators, as well as security and transport personnel, instead of as now when such a headquarters is merely perceived as a bureaucracy of specialists that support the commander when ordered to do so.

The effectiveness of a tactical HQ does not depend on the size of the peacetime manning, but rather on the quality and relevant practical professional experience – and ability to work as a team – of its core personnel.

There is an unfortunate tendency to create a staff by the immediate filling of office space with officers (defined as persons in uniform carrying officer's rank), rather than the gradual building-up of staff as experience is gained and real workload is increasing.

A fully manned basic tactical formation HQ is organised as a pool of small functional teams, each of a couple of planners and a few assistants. The teams either conduct current operations or they reconnoitre and plan



Litouwse (links) en Estlandse militair tijdens een schietoefening met een Bill-raketwerper tijdens de oefening Baltic Eagle, september 2002
(Collectie: IMG/KI)

future operations, the immediately following operation or possible contingencies.

In order to reduce vulnerability and plan at the same time as conducting current operations, the fully manned staff is large enough to establish two to three command posts manned by a combination of these small functional teams. The manning should also ensure that there are enough assistant watch-keepers to control intensive operations for 24 hours a day for an extended period without rest. However, keeping such a large fully manned tactical staff during normal peacetime training conditions makes certain that the staff 'rot' due to lack of meaningful work. This is what happened in the past.

A constant contingency planning

In the West only formations like the U.S. immediate reaction formations that combine an intensive exercise level (both by higher headquarters of the formation and the formation conducting training with its subordinate units) with constant contingency planning for possible worldwide deployments may avoid bureaucratic rot of the staff. In all other cases a fully wartime manned staff will quickly deteriorate though formalism and laziness.

Therefore the only solution is to limit the daily manning to those who can be properly occupied at the defined activity and readiness level. In a British mechanised or the armoured brigade staff, the peacetime manning is limited to 9 officers and 27 other ranks. The staff will, however, need to exercise regularly with the augmentation of watch-keepers and liaison officers to properly practice operational procedures. These augmentation staff officers may come from the reserve cadre or from the regular training structure cadre. In the British case,



Estlands marineschip (Collectie: IMG/KI)

the augmentation consists of 14 officers (1 senior liaison officer and 13 watch-keepers) plus 6 officers attached from the combat support units.

The Central Staff level

Another side of the problem was the situation in the central ('General') staffs. The Soviet/Warsaw Treaty Organisation experience led to the creation/maintenance of structures that saw their role as both narrow and total.

The staff should control the preparation of the forces (land forces and supporting air force elements) for war, a total war that justified high priority access to all resources of society. The role of the politicians was to make sure that the resources would be made available as the only role of the armed forces was to defend the future existence of the nation. Within that mission framework, the only military-political dialogue necessary was the military answering questions from the political side about how the defence requirements could be met in the best possible way.

The staffs tried to cover all aspects of defence related planning and administration, but the focus was on the creation of army units, rather unrelated to the available resources, and the theoretical concepts for their use in war. There was very little interest in the more mundane administrative work of developing effective use of finances, accounting, materiel and personnel, and the development of proper, supporting logistic structures. The other services – air force and any navy – were formally under the central staff, but in reality left to develop as separate entities.

The Soviet bureaucratic tradition

The Soviet bureaucratic tradition – at the same time – led to these staffs being bloated in personnel, unfocused, totally centralised, decision and responsibility avoiding, with activities unrelated to the reality in the units, interested in planning and concepts rather than in learning through implementation.

Relations within the staff and with other authorities and staffs at the state centre were often hampered by a lack of clear lines of responsibility,

detracting from the creation and maintenance of a quality product. Seen from the outside, and from the units, the central staff was a very large group of inert, ineffective, self-serving bureaucrats, selected on the basis of rather empty 'high education' diplomas rather than proven professional, analytical and administrative ability.

In order to lead and implement reforms effectively, these central staffs have to be transformed in every sense. The end-state of the reconstruction should be a flat hierarchical network of co-operating small teams, each team with a well-defined responsibility and delegated authority. These should be joint service, and the main function should be development planning, general administration, and control of implementation at highest policy level, in direct support of the Chief of Defence and in close interaction with the MOD.

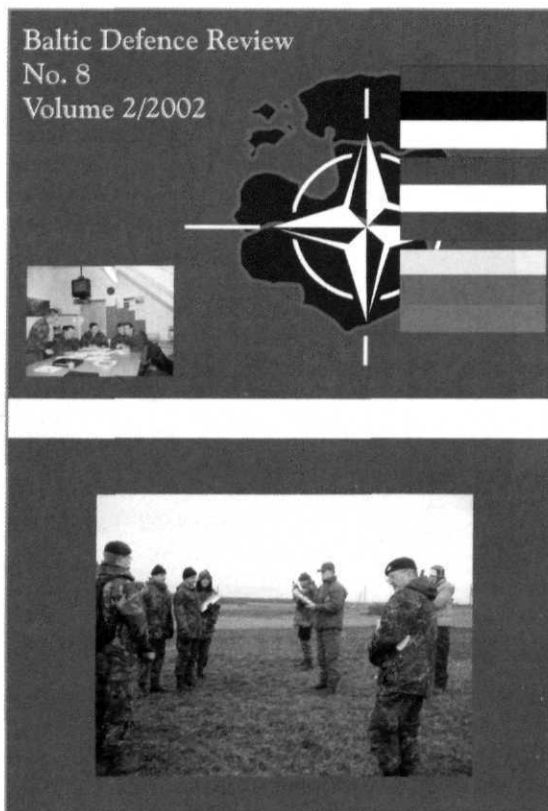
Collocation with the MoD

Collocation with the MOD will ease co-operation and make continued duplication of effort less likely. At the same time, collocation will underline the requirement for strict discipline in the maintenance of good staff procedures and clear responsibilities on both sides. The central staffs should be drastically reduced in size, emphasising quality of personnel rather than number, in order to become focused and effective.

Control of operational planning and control of operations is to be done by a commander with a small joint service operations staff. To minimise duplication of effort and reduce the size (and increase the effectiveness) of the central staff, the operations staff may only be a partly separate organisation, in a location close to the central staff, supporting the joint planning and administrative staff with staff work in the purely operational field.

Rotation of key personnel

Both these two joint central staffs will keep a close link with reality in the



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units by regular rotation of key personnel and by a new organisational ethos emphasising humility to the two level of clients: the political masters and the units.

Such much smaller staff elements will be much more able to 'deliver' high quality, realistic 'products' – on time.

Presently very few CEE armed forces have yet come close to having such small and focused, central staff structures. It seems to be very difficult to get rid of the idea that bigger is better and that keeping all responsibilities and functions directly in control of one person, in one staff is the right solution. The users: the politicians and units are suffering as a result.

One problem has been uncertainty about the roles of the service staffs. The central 'General' staff was also the army staff – as that staff was mainly seen as an operational staff

concentrating on using the main armed service, the army. If an air force with a fighting capability existed, it might be partly integrated and given a reasonable priority. Otherwise, the air force as the navy would be seen as fairly irrelevant to the defence effort, and therefore left as orphans to develop on their own, fighting their own, successful or unsuccessful, political battle for resources.

With a combination of a joint central staff and a joint operational staff, the remaining, very important, task of the individual services (commander/ inspector with staff) is to maintain and develop the training and readiness of the units as well as being a centre of

service related professional understanding that can be used as a platform for the development of tactical structure and procedures. In order not to have overlap with the work of the joint staff structure planning elements, the service staffs should be closely collocated with that central staff. Such a development of small focused service staffs would be hindered by the creation of an independent *joint* Training Command.

If a joint Training Command is made responsible to the chief of defence and operational commander for the delivery of unit quality and readiness, this then takes away that core responsibility from the senior officer of each service, and removes accountability for quality from expertise. It is not safe to sail in a ship or fly in an aircraft where the training directives and standards do not reflect a combination of a high level of service professionalism and a clear and acute feeling of responsibility by the issuing authority. The development of joint Training

Commands is a result of an inappropriate imitation of a successful U.S. service institution: the U.S. Army TRADOC.

A proper logistic system

A special problem in the central staff structures has been the establishment of a proper logistic system. When the logistic system has been both reformed and developed, it will ensure effective, timely and sufficient support to the units in both peacetime garrisons and on international operations and after mobilisation. The service will be given by a transparent system that ensures honesty and minimises waste by constant outside scrutiny.

This is a long way from the chaotic and sometimes corrupt logistic systems that were left as part of the Soviet legacy of wasteful managerial

methods and normally self-serving attitude among officials.

Manning the armed forces

In Soviet style armed forces, manpower was recruited by conscription of, in principle, all young men for a long period of service in the military. In those forces the individual was deliberately suppressed through a combination of collective pressure and punishment as well as a brutal formal discipline. Service of the private soldiers had the character of time-limited slavery. Sons of the privileged classes would normally stay separate from the serving majority, only participating in 'reserve officer' training and camps, linked to their diploma studies in universities or other 'high schools'.

A gradual development away from that system started early in many CEE countries. However, even if the treatment of the soldiers improved in many states, armed forces manning was still dominated by the group of draftees from the less privileged part of the male society in the nation. The relatively low cost of the system was supporting its continuation, even if the changing spectrum of missions and readiness requirements underlined the need for change.

A different manning strategy

In an effective, reformed armed force, able to conduct a variety of operations rather than the large scale war that the mass conscription based forces prepared for, the manning strategy must be very different. This does not necessarily mean that conscription should be completely abandoned in favour of a contract soldier system.

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Onderwijs op het BDC (Collectie: IMG/KI)

However, a reformed structure must have a very strong presence of regular NCOs and technical specialists, and elite units on high deployment readiness must be fully manned by regulars.

The possibilities for recruiting a sufficient number of high quality young men, and women, to man and sustain the necessary force structure at home and on deployment may rule out a

tional operations. Only the parts of the armed forces needed for the purely territorial self-defence mission will have a strong component of conscript reserve personnel.

In order to make such a 'professionals via conscript training' system workable, the conscript training should be thoroughly reformed so that regular service and a high readiness force contract is seen as an attractive option,

absorb and train the gradual influx to the required high level. Therefore it is important that the 'net' for recruiting quality regulars is cast as widely as possible, including deliberate attempts to attract national minorities, in Latvia and Estonia mainly the Russian-speakers, even those who still haven't qualified for citizenship.

The officer education system

The typical officer education institution of the Soviet tradition had two types of faculty members, whether it was a military academy or a general staff academy. The leading group consisted of ageing professors of military science, colonels or generals who had been conducting postgraduate and doctoral studies in this or similarly organised institutions and who had served there 15-20 years. They were supplemented by a group of civilian academics, totally dominated by natural scientists.

The study programme of the full officer education system had many levels: company-battalion, regiment, division, army, front, staff, general staff, the purpose of each was to ensure the mastering of the scientifically correct command or staff procedures of that level.



Een hoorcollege op het BDC (Collectie: IMG/KI)

straight, fully regular solution. A high youth employment rate makes a situation with serious recruiting problems likely. A reformed manning structure could – as in some Nordic States – consist of a mixture of a strong cadre of regular long contract NCOs, regular contract soldiers on high readiness, and in technically very demanding jobs, some of these volunteering for contract service during their training as conscripts.

Units may have a strong component of regular reserve personnel with a high readiness force contract, personnel that normally has a full conscript training plus the experience from six months or more service on interna-

creating a high number of qualified volunteers.

Benefits of a mixed system

One benefit of a mixed system is the ability to sustain long deployments of a relatively large number of personnel. In such a system it can be done without having to increase the size of the standing force or wearing the existing force down by too frequent absence from the families. This burden on the families of regular military personnel has been a major issue in several European armies during the last decade.

However, the key is also a high percentage of good regulars who can

Focus on purely military matters

The education, even the highest, focused completely on purely military matters, related to preparing for and winning a major war and then handing that successful result back to the politicians. The purpose of the education was not so much that of learning to think and work professionally in a general sense, but that of ensuring that the officer would be well drilled and indoctrinated to fit well into the next higher position. The postgraduate study programmes had either a natural science or a military science focus, the latter preparing the future professors that could sustain the institutions.

This system is totally different from the military education system of Western type armed forces. The faculty will also be a mix of officers and academics. However, the officers must be persons with recent practical experience in the units or staffs, who can pass on updated knowledge and skills from these. They should be from the best end of their class, relatively close to the cadets or students in age, able to act effectively as professional role models, and after their 2-4 years period as teachers, if successful, rotated back into the forces to an enhanced career.

Career persons should likewise dominate the group of civilian academic faculty members, some university academics on a part-time contract with the school, others on time-limited contracts with the institutions. Some may have natural science backgrounds, but academics with a background in political or social sciences and humanities should form the largest part of the group.

Four levels of education

The education system will tend to have three or four levels: the basic officer education, a short 'junior staff course' and a 'command and staff course'. The first level will prepare the young officer generally and for their first practical assignment. The second will supplement the basic education and be given to all regular officers. The third level will only be relevant for the best 10-30 percent. It will build on the professional understanding generated by around 10 years of practical service and encourage and assist the officers to develop themselves during the rest of their career.

The course will endeavour to deepen the understanding and acceptance of the way that the armed forces of a democracy must interact with the civilian structures, subordinated to political control. Any fourth level education will normally concentrate on that specific issue as it is seen at the time of the course to prepare the course members for high command.

In their attitude to the general and academic civilian education of the officers, the societies and the elected politicians must develop to understand the rather limited relevance of civilian academic 'credits' to the quality and loyalty of the officer corps. A good democratically oriented officer corps is developed by its constant interaction – during education and service – with the civilian society that it serves.

A constant interaction

The very close links and constant interaction between the military and the civilian and political sides makes the field of an exclusive 'military science' – other than professional understanding – meaningless.

The two structures, their purpose, and their products could not be more different, and Soviet type indoctrination structures must be thoroughly changed and reformed to help other development.

The general staff officers

The system for developing, educating and training officers reflects basic differences in how an ideal general staff officer is seen, what profile a representative of the intellectual elite of the service has. In a thinking armed force, the ideal is an officer with a thorough practical service background. That background interacts with theoretical schooling and a developed character to create a holistic thinking generalist with a deep sense of responsibility towards the defence mission.

He/she has a well-developed tendency and ability to seek and analyse 'outside the box' and to present the findings in spite of these being less than popular, at the same time as he remains a loyal and effective implementor of any decision taken by the commander. He/she will actively seek development and results rather than privilege. He will interact closely with the units as he also sees himself as their servant.

The personality profile and education is fundamentally different from that of a Soviet type general staff officer who is seen as a long serving specialist, awaiting orders to act, even if the results are clearly 'inside the box'. He is not supposed to think or act without authority. He is basically a 'staff technician'.

The personnel management system

In a normal good quality armed force, there is a clear and generally accepted connection between rank and position on one side and ability and experience on the other.

The foundation of the personnel management system is based on a clear definition of the education, practical experience, age and personality requirement of each cadre and specialist position in the peacetime structure and fully mobilised force.

Recruiting and training

Recruiting and formal training takes place and individuals are rotated between different positions and practical experiences to fulfil the requirements. Independent selection boards that must insure against favouritism administer a personnel evaluation system that endeavours to give an objective picture of the development of each member of the cadre or specialist. The pay and social system must make certain that the rotation between jobs necessary to create practical professionalism in the cadre can take place without undermining the welfare and cohesion of the families. The retirement system ensures that the armed force avoid carrying a burden of persons who do not fit into the current and foreseen requirements for cadre and specialists.

Such a system may have existed in the CEE armed forces a generation or two ago. However, the general development in society has probably been the reason why that focus was lost. Therefore a proper system has to be developed from scratch, including a

focused and Western type understanding of the education and service background as well as personality requirement of each position.

Evaluation and selection

The evaluation and selection system must be reformed completely to remove favouritism and clientism. Selection must be based on demonstrated high quality. Rotation must be enforced and supported, as must early retirement. The system must ensure the right combination of relative youth and practical professional experience throughout the structure. There must be a balance between the number of officers graduated from the basic officer education and the positions, mainly platoon leader and other subaltern officer positions where they can get practical experience.

Without a system that bases promotion and employment on proven quality, the officer corps will remain a 'battlefield', dominated by loyalty and favouritism linked to persons, and political manoeuvring among cliques.

Conclusion

The transition to effective, 'best-practice' Western type armed forces will achieve the following results:

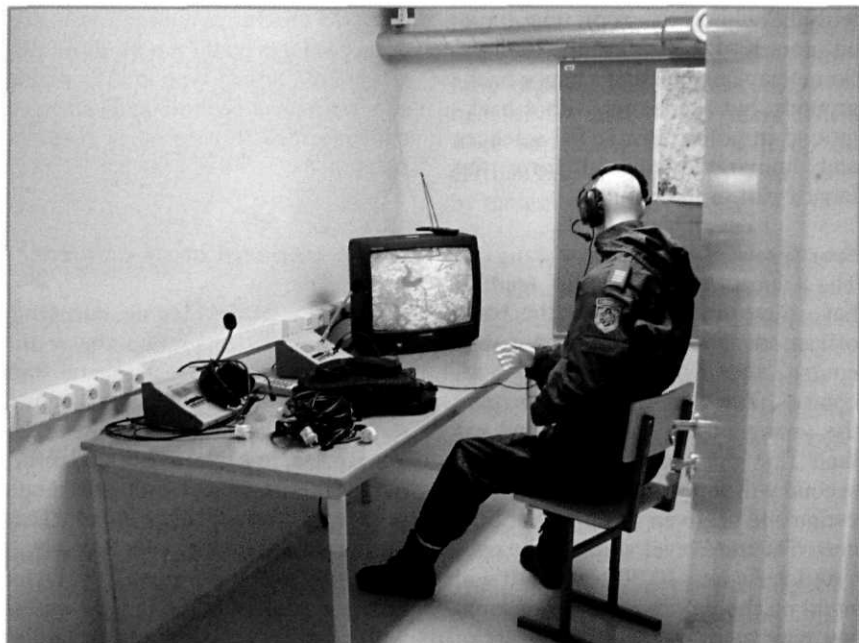
- A firmly rooted understanding in the central staff structures that its main task is to develop and maintain effective units, within the important context of the tactical formation level in the army.
- Drastically slimmed and task-oriented central staff structures.
- The existence of service chiefs/inspectors who have a clear responsibility to the Joint Operational Commander and via him to the Chief of Defence for unit quality.
- A reformed manning system, adjusted to the size and mission of the armed forces.

A look to the West

Some elements of the development challenges discussed above are also relevant for many West European states. During the last half-century, their armed forces developed within the tight framework of the East-West confrontation. It influenced all structures, all thinking, all education and training.

No need for close interaction

As the task was clear, the actual organisation of defence could be delegated to the professional military led by the Chief of Defence. There was no need for a close interaction between the Defence Minister and the Chief of Defence except in relation to



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- Military-political co-operation with a military leadership that combines a deep and updated professional foundation with an acceptance and understanding of its role in relation to the political leadership of their country.
 - A generation change in the now very reduced group of senior officers.
 - The existence of a truly professional officer corps managed by a personnel management system that aims at absolute fairness, give high priority to service in units, and that demands and supports rotation of key officer cadre personnel every 2-3 years.
 - A reformed, pragmatic and practical officer education structure.
 - A dynamic general staff officer corps with sizable group of members with the ability and moral courage to think, and debate, 'outside the box' – with the understanding of the political and professional leadership that this is crucial that this is necessary in a democracy.
- the budget, relations to the alliance (for the NATO-members), length of service of the conscripts, and the role of the national military industries.

Thus there was no need to collocate and integrate the Ministry and the Defence Staff, and the Minister of Defence was normally considered as one of the junior cabinet posts. The need for close interaction between the

political leaders and defence agencies in crisis and war was realized. It was exercised in special inter-ministry and department contact groups. However, the daily interaction was weak.

The armed forces were specialised for the foreseen missions of the big war: territorial self-defence and reinforcement of the territorial defence of the front-line states. They depended on the deep mobilisation of civilian resources, including reserve cadre, and the effectiveness of the expanded forces depended on the thorough, common tactical indoctrination of

mission of the armed forces became first and foremost to contribute to deterrence. In many West European armed forces this led to the stagnation of first professional studies and debate, and then of force structure and doctrinal development. The regular cadre got obtained rights and service conditions that mirrored those of the civilian environment rather than the requirements of their chosen profession. The requirement for independent professional thinking was understated in both the professional education and in the service of regular officers.

many West European military structures face challenges that are similar in some areas to those of the CEE states:

- The relations between the political and professional leadership must be adapted to mirror the requirements of conducting and managing current and (politically) risky operations. A combination of an amalgamation of the Ministry and the Defence Staff and the creation of a national joint operations HQ has demonstrated its potential.

- The operational forces must be organised as a flexible 'tool box', where the elements are equipped for and well exercised in co-operation among themselves and with forces from other states.

- Even the mission defending the state territory against threats is seen as a complex task, calling for flexibility in both direct response and in force expansion as well as the ability to co-operate effectively with other national and other states' agencies.

- The education of the cadre needs to develop the will and ability to adapt the use of the available personnel and equipment to the actual task and situation, if necessary without guidance from above. The requirement is as relevant for a platoon leader commanding a detachment in a Crisis Response Operation as it is for the designated task force commander interacting with the political leadership in the preparation of a new mission.

The education and training must develop the understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the different military tools under various conditions rather than only give a set of doctrinal correct responses.



Luchtfoto van het BDC in Riga (Bron: BDC; collectie: IMG/KI)

both regular and reserve cadre. The mission, the actual terrain where the defence would be conducted, and the available forces were known in advance. Even the enemy was known as well as his standard tactical and operational drill.

As the Cold War grew into routine, the preparations to fight for freedom and survival became less urgent. The

UN-mission service was the only source of 'out-of-box' operational experience. However, as this service often took place in low-intensity, stable confrontations and were guided by well-established SOPs, service here did not inspire professional development.

Similar challenges

This has led to a situation where